2: Lorimer T-3 (1930-4; 1934-8) 1939 AVT Burusho AVT

# Chapter 6

## EAST AGAIN

We knew, of course, that it would not be possible to ride 114
over the snow passes into Gilgit before June or July, but we had no wish to incur the heat of the Red Sea or the Indian plains in May. We therefore sailed on March 1st (1934), a slack shipping season, for few people return to India just before the hot weather if they can help it. After an uneventful journey out, with an unprecelentedly dull lot of fellow-passengers (or were we ourselves grown old and dull? we didn't feel it. We felt like a pair of school children who had snatched an unexpected holiday and were off on a wild adventure), we found ourselves back in the familiar clammy dampness of Bombay. We made it our first business to pay a courtesy call on the Russian scholar, Professor Ivanow, with whom DL had had correspondence from time to time. We thought of no practical advantage beyond the pleasure of the great man's personal acquaintance. Professor Ivanow is, of course, one of the leading authorities on the doctrines, practices, and literature of Ismailism, the Muslim sect to which the Hunza people belong. But the Hunza peasant would know as little about these esoteric mysteries as the nominal Church of England peasant aboutt he homoousian or filioque controversies or the detail of the Thirty-nine Articles.

It happened, however, that the Professor was in touch with 712
some Hunza people in Bombay, more especially with a small 115
deputation which had just come down—on foot through the winter snows—to pay their respects and their annual "Peter's Pence" to His Highness, the Agha Khan, the spiritual head of the Ismailis, and to them God's vice-regent upon earth, whether his headquarters be Paris or Monte Carlo or the racing stables.

2: Lorimer T-3 (1920-4; 1934-8) 1939 AVT Burushe AVT



or blame that comes at night." I may be misinterpreting his attitude of mind. These are not subjects you can thresh out as easily as the wheat, and neither his vocabulary nor mine would have sufficed to tackle them. But this I can vouch for, that every face you see looks restfully content, breaks readily into a happy smile; that there are in Hunza no nervous gestures and no haunted eyes, and in normal life no irritable words. There is little amiss with a faith which spells happiness and high-principled living without debasing fear of Hell or over-conscious hope of Heaven.

When the final crops of every kind are safely in, the first duty of the paterfamilias is to take stock of the year's yield. So much is set aside for seed-grain, and not the direst shortage will tempt him to violate the sanctity of this; so much is set aside for rent (if he is a tenant) or for the tax due on any craft he pursues—the miller pays a very small tax on his mill, the weaver on his loom-pit, the khalifa on his learning; and all pay (alas!) a sum as "Peter's pence" to their spiritual head, the Agha Khan. Next he calculates the "emergency reserve" that may be needed for hospitality or charity during the coming year; this also is scrupulously put aside unground. On the rest he and his family must live till next harvest, under the careful rationing of the senior housewife, the importance of whose rôle I have already stressed.

The period of comparative—well-earned and welcome—rest that ensues, is inaugurated by a solemn watch-night service of prayer and thanksgiving in the House of Assembly. One of our main difficulties in the early days was to get due notice of such events beforehand. Our people were slow to realize that the normal routine of their affairs could really interest us. The first news we had of this Harvest Thanksgiving Service was one late evening in October when Dádo casually said as he bade us good-night: "I'm off now to the all-night prayer." In answer to our questions he told us that the Assembly Hall and the women's annex would be packed with the entire population, and that the khalifas in rotation would keep up all night a reading of the sacred Persian books and of the Qur'an. "And shall you be able to understand all that they read?" "Oh no,

7:Tobe C,T-3 (1959)1960 AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza

CHAPTER 31

# *Breakfast Chitchat*

122 574 The Mir was a most tolerant and understanding host. I can't say for sure whether or not all his guests were treated as well as I, but I have no reason to believe otherwise.

Sometimes I would get down to breakfast alone at 8 o'clock in the morning. On other occasions there was Jahangir, sometimes Cec and on some occasions the doctor and the Mir's uncle and a few other individuals. I usually tried to get down at 8 o'clock . . . yet, there were occasions when I got down at 6 o'clock, if I had some adventure or specific project in view.

353 792 I remember this specific breakfast because the first thing I said to the Mir after I was seated at the table was, "I would judge that you were very fond of the Aga Khan."

You see, it wasn't very hard for me to judge this fact because our apartment was hung with pictures

7:Tobe C, T-3 (1959)1960 AV7 Burusho AV7
Hunza

of the Aga Khan and his wife in various poses and stages of his life. I had given some study to these photographs and many of them were inscribed in the hand of the Aga Khan with endearing terms to his friend, Jamal.

Our quarters were in the guest house—actually adjoining the palace but on a higher level. This building had been erected by the Mir's grandfather back in 1925. It was a well-built, handsome structure, firmly ensconced on a high rocky ledge of granite.

You walked down the Mir's long staircase from the sun room, then you walked up half a dozen or more stone steps, forward a few feet and then you climbed up a circular, enclosed wooden staircase to the guest quarters. These consisted of a large, comfortable sitting room with many easy chairs and a fine writing desk, a large bedroom with two comfortable beds and further on was the bathroom. Then to the right of the lovely sitting room was a balcony—spacious and inviting. From it you could view Rakaposhi and all its splendor and gorgeous loveliness.

The furniture all round was similar to that which you would find in the average better-class American homes. Photographs adorned the walls, among which were the photos of the old Aga Khan and his French wife.

When I mentioned the Aga Khan to the Mir, he waxed eloquent and his face beamed and he said, "Not only was I fond of him—not only did I love him—but we were close intimate friends. He was the most generous of men and especially to the people of Hunza. I revere his memory! He was a wonderful person. We really miss him since his passing. His ancestors came from Persia to India in 1834. In 1934, one hundred years later, to celebrate the jubilee of the founding of

792 his ancestors' dynasty in India, he donated what is now
871 the Hunzan school system. The fact that the children of Hunza are given a good education, without any cost to them, is due entirely to the kindness and benevolence of that great man. He started and maintained the system and I trust that his son will continue in his father's footsteps."

That the school system of Hunza is working, I can attest.

792 From what I have been able to gather and learn, Hunza was one of the states of India that contributed to the coffers of the Aga Khan. There is some story, true or mythical, that each year all of his religious followers throughout the world gave him a gift of gold or platinum to the extent of his weight. Now I do know
[316] that some gold was mined in Hunza and probably that, too, was sent to the Aga Khan or added to the sum or weight sent from all of the countries and the millions of his followers to be his gift but, as far as I know, at the present time there is not much gold being mined in Hunza and nowhere did I see any sign of anything that could be used as a means of export to bring money into Hunza.

124 In the meantime I was enjoying my breakfast and between munching mouthfuls of food, I was asking the Mir some rather important questions.

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681 "I read somewhere some time ago, that the revenues you obtain from the fines you levy upon people in Hunza who commit misdemeanors or break rules or laws are added to the coffers of your own estate."

The Mir thought this was a great joke and laughed heartily.

"To begin with," he said, "laws are seldom broken by my people. They are good people and they live peaceably and do not commit serious offenses. During